

## **The Rockville Mayor and City Council's Ten-Year Vision of a Desired Future Community**

### **Introduction**

Rockville, Maryland is the governmental, commercial, and cultural center of one of the most vibrant and progressive regions in the United States. Rockville is the seat of government for Montgomery County, which is among the most affluent and highly educated counties in the nation. The city's diverse population, its strong presence in the global economy, and its outstanding city services have earned it a reputation internationally as one of the very best cities in the world to live, visit, and conduct business. While the community is focused on the future and is home to leading edge businesses, educational institutions, and cultural and entertainment opportunities, the city also retains its strong sense of history, community, and hometown flavor.

During its biannual retreat of January 12-13, 2008, the Rockville Mayor and Council developed its ten-year vision for Rockville, and identified the short-term priorities to pursue over the next two years toward achieving that vision. The vision of a desired future state of the community focuses on the following seven major themes: Distinct Neighborhoods, One City; A Cultural Destination; Green City; Quality Built Environment; Exceptional City Services; Economic Development and Sustainability; And Community Engagement

### **Distinct Neighborhoods, One City**

Neighborhoods are the heart and soul of our city. Our neighborhoods are safe, attractive, and a source of pride for the residents. They reinforce a strong sense of identity and community among the citizenry. Well-maintained homes, business establishments, and public parks contribute to the city's hometown character and encourage feelings of strong neighborhood identity and harmony.

Our diverse neighborhoods represent the full history of the community, embodying the rich legacies of historic 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century communities, post-war "single family" suburban communities, and contemporary mixed-use and "smart growth" communities. There is a wide variety of housing choices and neighborhoods suitable to individuals of all ages, lifestyles, and income levels.

While all of our neighborhoods, new and old, exhibit strong individual identities; they are also fully integrated into the community. Neighborhoods are pedestrian friendly and physically connected to each other, to parks and to schools.

High quality public services and facilities are provided equitably by the City government, which contributes to community solidarity. Our children attend schools within the city's corporate limits and in the communities in which they live. Many community-wide special events unite us, and also attract people from throughout the region.

### **2008-2010 Vision Priorities:**

- *Ensure in our planning processes that pedestrian needs are met*
- *Develop a Master Plan for bike and pedestrian ways that surveys all signs, crossings, and sidewalks, identifies needed enhancements, and prioritizes the needs.*
- *Educate and provide operational support to neighborhoods for programming holiday events.*
- *Undertake an aggressive campaign and lobby the Montgomery County Public Schools to ensure that all Rockville school children are assigned to schools within Rockville.*

## **A Cultural Destination**

Rockville is a major regional cultural center, and is recognized as such regionally, nationally, and internationally. Published travel guides feature Rockville as a significant destination for visitors to the region.

Entering the City, visitors are immediately aware that Rockville is the seat of Montgomery County government, with a rich history, and a unique destination for diverse cultural presentations, and fine shopping. Our many public gathering places include the Town Square, F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater, Glenview Mansion, the Science Center, VisArts, Croydon Nature Center, and other cultural and sports facilities.

Free outdoor concerts can be enjoyed in Town Center and throughout the city. Many people from throughout the region enjoy our theatres, concerts, sports events, public art and sculpture, and other important presentations. Rockville is particularly noted for its nighttime entertainment.

### **2008-2010 Vision Priorities:**

- *Prepare and implement a cultural plan with ambitious goals for cultural amenities, including programs for cultural and entertainment activities throughout Town Center.*
- *Support and encourage the development of the new soccer team that will use the RMHS field.*
- *Continue to spearhead bringing a Science Center to the City*

## **Green City**

Residents, businesses, governments, and institutions employ sustainable practices that are sensitive to the environment. Conditions, technologies, and behaviors that significantly reduce water pollution, air pollution, and noise pollution are widespread and commonplace. The community is dedicated to fulfilling its responsibility for strong stewardship of, and living in harmony with, the natural environment.

Rockville is a leader in environmentally sustainable development that protects and enhances our community's quality of life. Public and private buildings in Rockville are constructed to achieve the highest contemporary national environmental standards. Rockville has dramatically reduced its carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions by utilizing alternative sources of energy, stabilizing energy use and maximizing efficiency, and employing sustainable building practices.

Rockville residents, governments, and businesses foster and apply sound environmental practices. High technology, energy efficiency and conservation, and recycling are employed to the community's advantage at every opportunity. Business and residential recycling rates are among the highest in the nation.

The erosion of the City's streams has been mitigated, and water quality standards set out in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement have been achieved. Our streets, parks, public and private areas are "clean and green."

### **2008-2010 Vision Priorities:**

- *Continue conducting an environmental education campaign, to include recycling, eradicating invasive species, and other activities fostering environmental quality.*
- *Create an incentive program for homeowners and citizens to adopt practices that reduce the negative environmental impacts of their homes and behaviors.*

- *Identify and tap into federal and state funding programs for improving energy conservation and efficiency.*

### **Quality Built Environment**

The quality of a city's built environment is fundamental to the community's overall quality of life. Rockville is a beautiful city, and a model of quality development. Our buildings conform to the highest environmental and design standards. Great attention is given to ensuring high quality materials and technologies are incorporated in construction. Most utilities have been placed underground.

Town Center has developed fully, and in accordance with the high quality design standards of the Town Center Master Plan. A distinctive city government campus reflects Rockville's status as the County seat of Maryland's preeminent county, and as a regional, cultural and entertainment center.

The community's streets are well lit, beautifully landscaped with many street trees, and resplendent with public art. Rockville has achieved an open street grid and excellent pedestrian connectivity. Pedestrian and bike use is encouraged and promoted, and dependence on automobiles is correspondingly reduced. Rockville Pike has been transformed into an attractive boulevard and remains an economic engine for the region.

### **2008-2010 Vision Priorities:**

- *Successfully complete the new Zoning Ordinance approval process.*
- *Conduct a street lighting survey to determine its adequacy.*
- *Improve PEPCO's responsiveness and quality of service*

### **Exceptional City Services**

Exceptional cities have exceptional local governments that are fiscally strong, and successfully anticipate and provide for community needs. The City of Rockville provides a full complement of services that are of high quality and well funded. The community's needs have been anticipated, and services adapt to and keep pace with changing needs. State of the art technology and other best practices are employed in providing municipal services.

Public safety and physical infrastructure are the top City service priorities. Public safety is ensured by means of a strong community-based policing model. Streets, sidewalks, water and sewer systems, stormwater facilities, parks, and facilities are well maintained and up to date. New development pays for the infrastructure capacity necessary to support it. Financial and budgetary management policies and practices ensure that available revenues support the City's priorities efficiently and effectively.

The City staff has a strong customer service focus, and is sensitive to the residents' needs and expectations. Services are equitably provided without regard to geography, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or age. Enhanced services are provided to vulnerable segments of the population.

#### *2008-2010 Vision Priorities:*

- *Reexamine the Charter with regard to the City Council's size, term length and concurrence, and at large representation.*
- *Better define the authority of and coordination among boards and commissions, the process for filling vacancies, and the qualifications of members.*
- *Analyze and adopt, if feasible, a property tax deferral program for seniors.*

#### **Economic Development and Sustainability**

A strong economy that provides abundant jobs is a fundamental component of a successful city. Rockville is a regional employment center for both the public and private sector, with a strong emphasis on clean, high-tech industry. As the County seat, state and county government are major employers. The City's reputation as a cultural and entertainment center is also a major factor in its economic development.

Rockville's strong, diversified economy is growing sufficiently to meet the demands for high quality public services, programs and facilities, and to support high quality retail, services and trades sectors. The City's commitment to economic development is realized through an economic development strategy that grasps fully the close interrelationships among the local economy, land use, private investment, quality planning, city regulations, public infrastructure and services, environmental quality, and the fiscal strength of the city government.

Rockville has the reputation as a highly desirable place to do business. A well-managed City government that enforces regulations fairly and consistently, high quality City services and public infrastructure, and an excellent educational system contribute to Rockville's success in attracting and retaining businesses.

The business community engages in civic and community activities and processes, and the City government encourages it to do so. The City's participation in strong partnerships among the private, public, and non-profit sectors effectively addresses community needs and aspirations.

#### *2008-2010 Vision Priorities:*

- *Develop and implement a City branding campaign with a goal of attracting the public to Rockville.*
- *Encourage the business community to become more involved in civic and community activities, including the City joining the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce and Committee for Montgomery County.*
- *Develop partnerships with local venues to increase local entertainment.*

#### **Community Engagement**

The most successful communities provide multiple opportunities and avenues for citizens to engage their government effectively, and work actively for the betterment of the community. In Rockville, the public's access to government is fully open. The City vigorously employs a multiplicity of communication techniques to keep the citizenry fully informed in a manner that facilitates broad and effective citizen participation in City decision-making.

The City learns from other successful communities, and stays current with the most effective means of communication. The full spectrum of media is employed, including electronic

technologies, the printed word, and direct, face-to-face communication. The City also works in concert with the press and other organizations to achieve optimal public information and education.

Residents and businesses use multiple methods to obtain information from the City, and to provide input to the City. Residents and businesses have access to all the information required to understand City actions and issues as well as external issues that affect the community. Residents are satisfied with the customized options to participate, and they feel their viewpoint is considered.

Public education and outreach programs are strategically designed to achieve the involvement of all interested individuals and groups at early stages of policy development and decision-making. The City measures and monitors the success of its efforts.

#### 2008-2010 Vision Priorities:

- *Improve the effectiveness and inclusiveness of citizen input systems, with the objective of achieving as broad and unifying a consensus as possible*
- *Increase resources for web-based and other technology-based methods for information dissemination.*